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**The American University in Cairo**

**School of Humanities and Social Sciences**

**The Department of English and**

**Comparative Literature**

**The Writer's Journey Into Solitude:**

**Self-Discovery in *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*,**

***Robinson Crusoe* and *Friday*.**

**By**

**Rabia Abdul Salim Madhi**

**April 2004**



The American University in Cairo

**THE WRITER'S JOURNEY INTO SOLITUDE: SELF-  
DISCOVERY IN *HAYY IBN YAQZAN*, *ROBINSON CRUSOE* AND  
*FRIDAY*.**

A Thesis Submitted by Rabia Abdul Salim Madhi  
To The English and Comparative Literature Department  
April / 2004

In Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for  
The degree of Master of Arts  
Has been approved by

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*For My Beloved Late Brother Mohamed Madhi:*

*Your gentle child-like features receding into darkness.*

*An interminable gulf separating our distant spheres.*

*Like a butterfly trapped in a gigantic clepsydra,*

*I drift in Time anticipating the advancing currents.*

*The promising progression of droplets appeases the Pang.*

*Rabia Madhi*

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## Introduction: Comparative Attitudes Concerning Solitude.

The idea of physical solitude often implies metaphysical solitude, and it is this spiritual state of detachment or self-enclosure that usually arouses the widest range of moral responses. Physical solitude is a metaphorical focus for an attitude that relates to self and society. In my thesis, however, I am primarily interested in the concept of solitude as a vehicle facilitating a journey of inward exploration into the mystifying labyrinth of the self in search of truth. In this sense, solitude becomes a condition enabling consciousness to achieve spiritual insight and truth with respect to the nature of self and world.

Stories of castaways on deserted islands have long been a mainstay in Western literature. Tiny land masses isolated by a surrounding ocean make ideal settings for allegories as well as psychological tales. The oldest known story of a castaway on a fabulous island is *The Shipwrecked Sailor*. This story was written on a papyrus scroll, which was found in 1881 in a chest in the Egyptian museum of the Hermitage in St. Petersburg (Foster, p. 9). Based on the writing of certain geographic names, Golenischeff assigns the

manuscript to a period not later than that of Senusert II of the Twelfth Dynasty — that is, early in the nineteenth century B.C.E. The protagonist returns home laden with riches. The *Sindbad, the Sailor* stories from *One Thousand and one Nights* belong to this same literary tradition.

In classical antiquity, Plato, Aristotle and Cicero were united in their insistence that the individual's first duty was to the state. Plato, who sympathized most with the individual longing for solitude, insisted that a philosopher must leave his solitary contemplation if called upon to participate in politics. Aristotle and Cicero acknowledged the value of the contemplative life, but they shared a deep revulsion from the idea of solitude. Aristotle felt that solitude was "a very terrible thing, because the whole of life and voluntary association is with friends" (Dillon, p. 3). Cicero believed that if a man studied in a solitude "so complete that he could never see a human being, he would die" (Ibid). Dillon explains that the most difficult paradox arising out of this horror of solitude was the need to reconcile the solitary state with the acknowledged ideal of self-sufficiency. Aristotle stated flatly that "the final cause and end of a thing is the best, and to be self-sufficing is the end and the best" (Ibid). He then



felt forced to extend the definition of self in order to avoid seeming to recommend solitude: "The term self-sufficient, however, we employ with reference not to oneself alone, living a life of isolation, but also to one's parents and children and wife, and one's friends and fellow citizens in general since man is by nature a social being" (Ibid, pp. 3-4). Throughout his philosophy, Aristotle reaffirmed the undesirability of solitude and the necessity for full participation in public life.

From the Anglo-Saxon writers to Malory in the fifteenth century, the general feeling expressed towards the solitary individual was primarily one of pity. "The exile, the rootless man cut off from the bonds and duties of society, represented not freedom and self-sufficiency, but incompleteness and meaninglessness" (Ibid, p. 7). Another interesting paradox is that medieval writers formulated ideals of opposing extremity: the ideal of an active life involved full participation, uniting duty and desire in the twin conception of contribution to and fulfillment in society. The ideal of a contemplative life also involved complete withdrawal from society, both physical and spiritual, and total dedication to God without the distractions of worldly commitments.

In the Islamic Tradition, Ibn Bajja's writings tend to highlight his

departures from al-Farabi and Avicenna. Unlike al-Farabi, Ibn Bajja is silent about the philosopher's duty to return to the cave and participate in the life of the city. He appears to argue that the aim of philosophy is unrelated to public life and can be achieved in solitude, if not among philosophic souls. Unlike Avicenna, who clearly distinguished between theoretical and practical science, Ibn Bajja is concerned with practical science only insofar as it is relevant to the life of the philosopher. He is contemptuous of allegories and imaginative representations of philosophic knowledge, silent about theology, and shows no concern for improving the multitude's opinions and way of life.

Solitude, as encountered in major works of literature, can illuminate the journey of the self in search for truth. It is a relative term that may refer to time, place or the mind. It can be voluntary or involuntary. It can be an expression of self-love, love of the community, or love of God. The flexibility of its semantic range signifies the uncertainty surrounding historical attitudes to it. At the beginning of *De Vita Solitaria*, Petrarch writes: "I believe that a noble spirit will never find repose save in God, in whom is our end, or in himself and his private thoughts, or in some intellect united by a close

sympathy with his own" (p. 105). The theme of solitude in literature is constant throughout history. From this perspective, close readings of Ibn Tufayl's *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Michel Tournier's *Friday*, demonstrate that solitude is a recurrent theme that possesses spiritual significance. These works convey an experience of solitude that helps us understand the self in relation to human and religious concerns.

*Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* [a living son of consciousness] is a philosophical romance written by the 12th-century Spanish-Arab philosopher and physician, Ibn Tufayl, the successor to Ibn Bajjah. The story communicates the secrets of Avicenna's "Oriental Philosophy" as experienced by a solitary hero, who grows up on a deserted island, learns about the things around him, acquires knowledge of the natural universe (including the heavenly bodies), and achieves the state of "annihilation" [*fanaa*] of the self in the divine reality. This is the apparent and traditional secret of the "Oriental Philosophy".

But the hero's wisdom is still incomplete, for he knows nothing about other human beings, their way of life, or their laws. In time Hayy chances to meet a member of a religious community inhabiting

a neighboring island, who is inclined to reflect on the divine law and seek its inner, spiritual meanings and who has abandoned the society of his fellow men to devote himself to solitary meditation. He does not at first recognize that this individual is a human being like himself; he cannot communicate with him and frightens him by his wild aspect.

After learning about the doctrines and acts of worship of the religious community, Hayy understands them as alluding to and agreeing with the truth that he had learned by his own unaided effort. Eventually, he even admits the validity of the religion and the truthfulness of the prophet who gave it. He cannot understand, however, why the prophet communicated the truth by way of allusions, examples, and corporeal representations, and why religion permits men to devote much time and effort to practical, worldly things.

In Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, the protagonist and narrator begins the novel as a young middle-class man in York in search of a career. His father recommends law, but Crusoe yearns for a life at sea. His subsequent rebellion and decision to become a merchant is the starting point for the whole adventure that follows. His vague but recurring feelings of guilt over his disobedience to his

father color the first part of the first half of the story and show us the depth of Crusoe's religious fears. Crusoe is steady and plodding in everything he does, and his perseverance ensures his survival through storms, enslavement, and twenty-eight years of isolation on a deserted island. In this thesis, I shall not attempt to trace the origin of this story in any literature that preceded it. However, it is worth mentioning that Dr. Friedrich Wackwitz, who takes up successively the various traditions to which he thinks Defoe was indebted, mentions *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* among other works (Secord, p .22).

In *Friday or les limbes du pacifique*, Tournier retells Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* but provides the story with philosophical depth. The famous hero is a castaway on a desert island with his pipe tobacco, a copy of the Bible, and a modern identity problem. After abandoning his cultural background and sinking into animalism, Crusoe returns to the world of the spirit by the noble act of writing. He develops a mystical relationship with his island, which he names "Speranza". When the rescue ship appears, Crusoe rejects the brutality of civilization reflected in the ship's crew. He stays on the island, while Friday chooses to leave, not accepting Crusoe's version of the world. Robinson cannot bear this prospect of solitude and

decides to commit suicide. But at just this moment, he finds the cabin boy, who decided to leave the ship where he was constantly abused. Robinson calls him Sunday.

## Chapter One: Solitude as a Means to Knowledge of the Divine.

*Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* is a tale of spiritual ascent that begins on an uninhabited island. Hayy first appears in a desolate setting, either spontaneously generated or cast ashore in a box. Crusoe-like, he is abandoned to his own resources until his innate intelligence develops by degrees eventually enabling him to dominate his surroundings. Through ceaseless observations and numerous reflections, Hayy gradually attains knowledge of the physical universe. Thereafter he advances into the realm of spiritual mastery and offers proofs for the existence of God. Seeking union with the one Eternal Spirit, he practises ascetic discipline of mind and body. Eventually, he reaches the state of ecstasy. His intellect merges with the Divine and he comes to perceive things that have never before been seen or heard.

Some critics argue that the primary purpose of *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* is to maintain that the inquiring rational soul of the *philosophus autodidactus* (the self-taught philosopher) is capable of ascending to knowledge of transcendent truth through the unaided effort of his active intellect. Bronnle agrees with Ockly who proclaimed that the idea underlying the story is to show how

human beings can attain knowledge of the Divine. Hence the story indicates how a creative mind groping in the dark can eventually achieve philosophical insight through a gradual awakening of the soul (Bronnle, pp.10-11). Pococke in his Latin translation of 1671 also asserted that the work demonstrates “by what means human reason can ascend from contemplation of the Inferior to knowledge of the Superior” (Conrad, p.239). Other renowned critics, such as Gauthier, Gomez and Palencia, have maintained that the primary concern of Ibn Tufayl is to illustrate the harmony of religion and philosophy (Ibid). Undoubtedly, the ineffable nature of religious experience manifests itself prominently in his text. My intention is not to delve into the profound philosophical notions that this text contains. Instead, I will offer a close examination of the psychological development of the protagonist in light of his solitary experience. However, since this experience is often expressed in language, we must be attentive to the literary means by which it is presented to us.

*Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, as based on a previous work by Ibn Sina (Avicenna), relates the history of an infant, a princess’s son, whose birth had to be concealed. The infant is cast ashore upon an equatorial island, suckled by a gazelle and spends the first fifty years of his life without contact with other human beings. At the



age of seven, the shock of the gazelle's death sets the boy on the quest which is the book's central theme: the search for the spirit of life. Through sustained observation and reflection, Hayy develops his native intelligence and ingenuity until he acquires mastery of the environment and expertise in the natural sciences.

Along with the attainment of scientific knowledge, the eponymous Hayy Ibn Yaqzan reasons from the diversity of the world to its wholeness and from the particular objects of sensory perception to an abstract epistemology of universal forms. He infers the existence of God as both the necessary, primary and non-corporeal cause of the universe and its prime mover. Along the way, he deals with many of the major issues of metaphysics. In short, he becomes a philosopher.

It is particularly interesting that Hayy's life in isolation is composed of seven stages of seven years each, during which, by his own efforts, he progressively achieves knowledge of himself and the universe. At the end of seven times seven years, in absolute solitude without prophet or revelation, he achieves union with the Almighty. So far, however, he is unaware of other human existences, until one day, a holy man named Absal arrives on his island.

In Absal's home island, life is regulated by a conventional religion of rewards and punishments. Having reached a higher level of self-discipline, and believing that his highest spiritual ambitions can only be realized through asceticism and solitude, Absal renounces the world and decides to spend the rest of his life on an island that he thinks is uninhabited.

Ahmed Amin claims that a rational man is capable of ascending from sensory perception to concrete Truth, and that thought is independent of language (Azooz, p. 91). This can be a frightful notion, because what distinguishes us as human beings is our ability to know ourselves symbolically and self-reflexively. Moreover, Heidegger remarked, "language speaks man." Since we are not beings who use symbols, but beings who are constituted by their use, all experience is verbal in nature. Although experience may not necessarily be reducible to its articulation, it is brought into being for us through its symbolic representation.

Ibn Tufayl states in the prologue that the things he wants to deal with cannot be properly expressed in words. However, Ibn Tufayl himself is addressing an imaginary friend, trying to convey a certain meaning through his writing. It is only after Absal teaches Hayy language that he discovers the astonishing fact that what his

pupil already knows coincides with the truths symbolized by the religion that Absal himself professes. Ibn Tufayl exhorts his friend to listen to his indications with the ear of his heart and to comprehend them with the gaze of his reason. He does not want further oral explanations, for “it is dangerous to make pronouncements on the ineffable, and the margins in which I work are narrow” (p. 150). Although sometimes given to figurative excess, Ibn Tufayl warns his friend against literal interpretation of his words:

Did I not just tell you how narrow my scope for expression is here and warn you that my words would make a false impression in any case. Your misapprehension is due solely to your confusing my symbol (*al-mithal*) with what it represents (*al mumaththal bihi*). You expect a one-for-one correspondence. Such literalism is not tolerable with ordinary figures of speech, and it is all the less tolerable in this special context (p. 154).

What this means is that Ibn Tufayl is aware that language must be used rigorously as well as flexibly in order to communicate the nature of the mundane world as well as the truths of the spirit.

At this point I would like to draw the reader’s attention to

some minor differences between the original Arabic text and the English translation. My intention is not to point out discrepancies in the translation, but to indicate that a literal translation of the text would be absurd.

In the early stage of his journey, Hayy tried to discover the reason for the gazelle's death. Having found no external defect, he imagined that the hurt from which she died must be hidden in the inward part of the body. Hayy made ceaseless observations and discovered that, on the bodies of wild beasts and other animals, organic members were solid. In all cases, there were only three cavities, namely, the skull, the chest, and the belly. He felt that the essence of life must be in the middle most part, so he resolved to open the chest of the gazelle to remove whatever ailment that lay within.

In Goodman's translation, Hayy is described as "cutting through the flesh"; meanwhile, the literal translation would be 'he reached beyond the veil [*hijab*] surrounding the diaphragm'. In several other instances, the words "covering" too is used instead of "veil" [*hijab*] which was used in the original Arabic text; and "he pierced the diaphragm" (incidentally the word for diaphragm in Arabic is *hijab*). In addition, Hayy finds the heart "wrapped in an extremely tough

envelope”, the word Ibn Tufayl uses for ‘envelope’ is *Ghishaa* which may also be translated as ‘veil’. When Hayy finds the heart, it is described as being “better protected than any other organ (Hayy had) seen” (Goodman, p.113). In Arabic the original sentence would be literally translated as ‘the heart is veiled by such a strong veil the like of which (Hayy) had not seen in other organs’ (Ibn Tufayl, p.43).

It is noteworthy that earlier on, Ibn Tufayl claimed that the “vital organ” (the heart) must “be centrally located” (Goodman, p.112), and before that he stated that “a place is at the center of the circle of light only when those who live there can see the sun at its zenith, directly overhead” (Ibid, pp.104-5). One may infer from these statements that for Ibn Tufayl the heart is centrally located, and those with a heart to understand perceive the Truth symbolized as the light of the sun at it’s highest point.

Various passages in *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* suggest how Light or Truth pierces the veil covering the physical heart, thereby illuminating it with true knowledge and understanding. Similarly, the body of this text may be dissected thoroughly and objectively, but only those with a heart to understand are able to pierce through the veil that Ibn Tufayl has cloaked over his words.

A controversial and difficult question is, why did Iby Tufayl choose to write in an allegorical form, or "veiled language"? Avicenna gave an elaborate justification. He claimed that what he intended to do by allegory is to convey one message to the "many" in sensible imagery, while conveying a different message to the philosophically-minded few (Heath, pp. 150-153). If this is the situation, the allegorical form can be stripped away without changing the meaning of the text. According to the opposite view, the motive of allegory is to conceal the truth rather than to communicate it. This view is most famously propounded by Leo Strauss and his followers, who claim that writers fearing persecution and misinterpretation often "hide" their true views behind the façade of allegory in order to protect both themselves and their message. A third view of allegory is that the mystical message or account of spiritual union cannot be expressed adequately in the literal language of logic and argument. According to this view, the allegorical form is an essential aspect of the text and, hence, cannot be excised without detriment to the author's meaning.

According to Ibn Tufayl, intimacy with the Divine is an experience that cannot be described or put in a book. "But...a

discursive, intellectualized introduction to this experience...is something that can be put into words and set down in books" (p. 99). He then states that those who speak of this experience publicly do so in "riddles" *ramzan* (which also means 'symbols'), "because our true, orthodox and established faith guards against a hasty plunge into such things" (Ibid).

Although critics may consider this statement as an indication that Ibn Tufayl used "veiled language" because he feared persecution, the historical records that exist suggest a different viewpoint. Ibn Tufayl's full name was Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Malik Ibn Tufayl al-Qaisi, the last word indicating that his family claimed descent from the celebrated Arabian tribe of Qais. He was born at Wadi Ash, the modern Guadix, about forty miles N.E. of Granada, probably between 1100 and 1110 A.D. He is said to have practiced medicine at Granada and to have been governor of that province, at some point in his career. In 1154, the Caliph Abd al-Mu'min appointed his son Sayyid Abu Sa'id to the governorship of Granada, Malaga, Algeciras, Ceuta and Tangier, and Ibn Tufayl joined him as secretary.

From that moment, nothing is known about Ibn Tufayl's career until he appears at the Court of the Caliph Abu Ya'qub, elevated to

the high offices of Wazir and chief royal physician. The historian Abd al-Wahid describes the Caliph as a man who ceaselessly collected books from all parts of Andalusia and the Maghrib, and so diligently sought out learned men, such as Ibn Tufayl who was "so beloved by the Commander of the Faithful that he used to stay successive days and nights with him without leaving the palace" (Fulton, p. 11). It is therefore doubtful that Ibn Tufayl had any fear of persecution in writing "*Risalat Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*" (the word *Risalat* means a message in Arabic). Indeed, it seems that Ibn Tufayl was trying to communicate a certain message.

The question at this point is whether Truth can be expressed, and by what linguistic means. As Burgel rightly points out, the notions of *ramz* and *ishara* were well-known terms, which were traditionally established in previous literature. In his critique of al-Ghazali, Ibn Tufayl mentions that "most of what [al-Ghazali] said was in the form of hints (*ramz*) and intimations (*ishara*), of value to those who hear them only after they have found the truth by their own insight or to someone innately gifted (*fitra*) and primed to understand. Such men need only the subtlest hints (*ishara*)" (Goodman, p.101). The word *ishara* reappears when Hayy attains the highest degree of knowledge and passes from logical



conclusion to mystical vision: "I shall not leave you without some hint (*isharat numi'u biha*) as to the wonders Hayy saw from this height, not by pounding on the gates of truth, but by coining symbols" (Goodman, p.149).

The terms *ramz* and *ishara* occur in a relevant context in the Quran. In the story of the prophet Zacharia who cannot believe that he and his wife will in their old age have a son, he asks Allah for a sign and receives the following answer: "Thy sign shall be that thou shalt speak to no man for three days but with signals" [*ayatuka alla tukallima 'l nasa thalathata ayamin ella ramzan*] (S.III. 41). In this instance *ramz* mean a gesture, or a hint that replaces speech in a situation when the speaker is unable to speak. Similarly, the word *ishara* appears in the story of the Virgin Mary, after her family had reproved her following the birth of the prophet Jesus. She receives a divine consolation and the order "if thou dost see any man, say, 'I have vowed a fast to (God) Most Gracious, and this day will I enter into no talk with any human being'" (S. XIX. 26). So when her family reproached her, she "pointed to the babe *fa asharat illayhi*. They said: 'how can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle'" (S. XIX. 29). It is noteworthy, that in the same chapter, the word *hijab* mentioned in verse 17, has been variously translated: "She placed a screen *hijaban* (to

screen herself) from them; then We sent her our angel, and he appeared before her as a man in all respects” (Yusuf Ali).

Burgel rightly observes that *ramz* and *ishara* are chosen to denote allusive speech, a kind of style and linguistic means appropriate to express the ineffable (Burgel, p. 118). However, he also argues that the old literary convention of veiled language continued to flourish in Islamic times, owing to the more or less “constant prevalence of a political and social situation in which open discourse was — and unfortunately still is in more than one case in our present time — a dangerous undertaking” (Ibid, p.131). Thus, he suggests that when talking of the “veil...easily pierced by those fit to do so” (Goodman, p.166), Ibn Tufayl was expressing his critical attitude toward the conservative legal framework of society in al-Andalus and the Western Maghrib (Ibid, p. 132).

It is a well-known fact among Muslims that *Al-Zahir* and *Al-Batin* are among the ninety-nine names of Allah. Allah is Manifest *Al-Zahir* through intellectual faculties; and he is Immanent *Al-Batin* to senses and fancy. “Allah is the Immanent who is veiled from the perception of sights, concealed from the perception of mentalities and minds” (Roushdy, p. 89). Undoubtedly, Ibn Tufayl, who begins his story by praising Allah with some of His ninety-nine names,

knew the meaning of *Al-Zahir* and *Al-Batin*. This introduction is omitted from Goodman's translation.

Burgel's conclusions may or may not hold an element of truth in them, but what is truly astonishing is his contention that Ibn Tufayl, in describing Absal's fellow islanders as "sheep gone astray, only worse" (Goodman, p. 162), was using a verse from the Quran which originally referred to Muhammad's opponents. It is much more plausible that our author used this phrase to refer to the average Muslim. According to Burgel, this passage indicates the arbitrary misleading use that Ibn Tufayl makes of the Qur'anic text. It is absurd to claim on one hand that *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* is an "initiational tale" in which the hero "reaches his goal...in the vision of God and the mystical union with the highest being"(Burgel, p.132), and, on the other hand, to imply that the author is abusing the sanctity of the Holy Book.

Ibn Tufayl does not use quotation marks in comparing the islanders to "sheep gone astray". The novel is charged with properly quoted verses from the Quran, and its language is characteristic of Islamic culture. Ibn Tufayl likens his fellow Muslims to sheep, because they were so distracted by greed in amassing worldly possessions that they had no means of reaching Wisdom. Burgel seems to assume that the Quran only criticises

the opponents of Prophet Muhammad, whereas in fact there are many instances in the Quran where Muslims are criticised.

Another critic, Lawrence I. Conrad, claims that praying, practicing the Zakat and going on pilgrimages are professions and commitments by which Hayy “gains nothing in spiritual terms” (p. 244). What Conrad fails to understand is that Hayy’s contemplations, fasting, care for the environment and physical hygiene are all part of the so-called “professions and commitments” by which Hayy gains spiritual ascension before he meets Absal. An obvious instance in which Hayy practices Zakat can be found in these words: “Hayy exerted every effort...never allowing himself to see any plant or animal hurt, sick, encumbered, or in need without helping it if he could” (Goodman, p. 146). In addition, Hayy prescribed for himself circular motions of different kinds including circling the island in an attempt to imitate the heavenly bodies. It is clear that Ibn Tufayl is alluding to the Muslim practice of circling the Ka’ba at Mecca.

Conrad also claims that “as the philosopher-mystic’s understanding and knowledge transcend the symbolic representations of revealed religion, he comes to find the latter superficial, compromised and unfulfilling” (p. 246). This point of view is quite unreasonable considering the fact that what the

philosopher-mystic discovers in the end assumes a symbolic meaning. Revealed religion is Truth that cannot be described as superficial. For it was through the so-called “superficial professions and commitments” which Hayy imposed on himself that spiritual fulfilment was achieved. We should recall as well that Ibn Tufayl criticises al-Farabi for openly identifying with the imagination and for claiming that he prefers philosophy to revelation (Goodman p. 100).

## Chapter Two: Self-Knowledge through Religious Conversion.

Robinson Crusoe, the protagonist and narrator of Defoe's adventurous novel, is a young middle-class man from York who is in search of a suitable career. His father recommends law, but Crusoe is adamant in his decision to become a merchant, since he yearns for a life at sea. He leaves home without heeding his father's warnings and predictions. This action might be described as Crusoe's 'original sin'. Although the modern reader would probably view this act as little more than a mild offence, Defoe on many occasions calls it a sin. One of Defoe's primary literary concerns is to place Crusoe on the island. This is why he neglects various opportunities that might have enabled him to exhibit his talent in narrative realism. Indeed, less than fifty pages are devoted to Crusoe's early wanderings before the reader discovers him again on an uninhabited island.

Crusoe's motivation in leaving his home and Defoe's reason for labeling this act a sin has been variously interpreted by different critics. Novak, for example, asserts that the rationale for this action may be found in Crusoe's personal characteristics (p. 32). Starr, on the other hand, claims that Crusoe is actually motivated by the wildness that Defoe believed characteristic of unregenerate man in

general and of youth in particular (p. 77). Crusoe mentions early in the novel that his “head began to be filled very early with rambling thoughts” (p. 8). He also confesses that all his “miscarriages were procured by [his] foolish inclination of wandering abroad, and pursuing that inclination” (p. 42). He also observes “how incongruous and irrational the common temper of mankind is, especially of youth” (p. 20). Whether his motivation is personal or universal is not the issue. Defoe seems more concerned with the notion of sin, which is certainly a common feature. By running off to sea, Crusoe flouts family, social and divine order, thereby disrupting the established pattern of human affairs that are governed by Providence. By extension, he is guilty of challenging God’s very existence for he leaves “without asking God’s blessings, or [his] father’s” (p.12).

Crusoe’s sin partly consists in his rejecting the calling chosen for him by his father. The master of the ship gravely warns Crusoe against setting foot on a sea vessel, and thus echoes his father’s warning that it was not his calling to go to sea (p.19). Throughout the novel, the reader perceives a virtual equation between paternal and Divine authority, which rests on the fifth commandment and on Deuteronomy 27:16 — a text which Defoe used frequently elsewhere (Starr, p. 78). The wickedness of Crusoe’s deed is

emphasized by its resemblance to similar acts of rebellion committed by the prodigal son and Jonah.

In challenging paternal and divine authority, Crusoe finds no real freedom. Instead, he is mastered by events rather than master of them. There is a clear connection between the will of God and the will of the parent in the choice of an occupation. Crusoe observes on several occasions that his failure to take his father's advice was the true cause of his misfortunes (pp. 8,10,12,). His wandering spirit prevents him from settling in one place and finding contentment in his situation. Thus, his twenty-eight years in isolation may be an appropriate punishment.

Moreover, Crusoe's ensuing change of circumstances employs conventional metaphors for spiritual states, the effects of which are crucial to the novel's literary and religious qualities. Crusoe's reason is subjected to his rebellious inclination. After his initial misstep, external circumstances govern his actions. In a sense, journeying physically symbolizes erring spiritually. Yet it is through seafaring that Crusoe is cast ashore alone, eventually achieving spiritual growth in his solitude.

Defoe's hero is not a hermit by nature. He survives his solitude but does not enjoy it. Fortunately, he is cast away with the standard products of seventeenth-century science. He spends



much time establishing order in his environment and imposing his values upon his surroundings. Eventually, the kingdom over which he presides becomes a huge but tidy magazine of things and notions. Thus equipped with the pre-requisites for the world of culture that he is to create, Crusoe chronicles his successful and failed experiments. He learns from his mistakes and diligently pursues truth.

There is a clear correlation between his empirical investigations and his religious experience. In fact, his earnest search for the knowledge of things assists in his knowledge of religious principles. According to Vickers, Defoe testifies to a body of beliefs generally known as natural theology in his reconciliation of part-secular and part-Christian ideals (p. 112). Defoe would have accepted the idea that Providence is revealed by science. Yet, since science has its limitations and man is allowed to know only aspects of the divine creation, God alone has perfect knowledge of the essence of things. Crusoe inquires into the origin of created things: "What is this earth and sea, of which I have seen so much? Whence is it produced, and what am I, and all the other creatures, wild and tame, human and brutal, whence are we?" (p. 93). His response is illuminating: "It is God that has made it all.... He guides and governs them all, and all things that concern them;

for the Power that could make all things must certainly have power to guide and direct them" (p. 94).

Crusoe arrives at religious insights largely through everyday experiences. A significant example occurs when he is astonished to find healthy barley plants shooting out of the ground. He first calls the sprouting corn a miracle. Then he remembers that he himself had carelessly tossed out a few husks of corn in that shady area, and attributes it to mere good luck. Further reflection leads to religious insights:

My religious thankfulness to God's Providence began to abate too upon the discovering that all this was nothing but what was common; though I ought to have been as thankful for so strange and unforeseen Providence, as if it had been miraculous; for it was really the work of Providence as to me, that should order or appoint, that ten or twelve grains of corn should remain unspoiled.... also that I should throw it out in that particular place where, it being in the shade of a high rock, it sprang up immediately; whereas, if I had thrown it anywhere else at that time, it had been burnt up and destroyed. (p. 81)

Crusoe carefully saves the harvest in an attempt to plant it again. But after planting his grain in the dry season when it cannot sprout, he learns from his mistake. He then decides to carefully tabulate the seasons in a detailed and accurate manner to facilitate his farming. His fidelity to fact and his simple and straightforward style are truly commendable. Indeed, through his useful observations, Crusoe gains practical knowledge and learns many trades on which his physical survival depends. But most importantly, he discovers that there is an “invisible power which alone directs such things” (p. 91). Moreover, Crusoe later realizes that “nothing but a crowd of wonders” permits him to eat his daily bread (p. 132). Vickers observes that this incident illustrates Defoe’s belief in how divine wisdom is made manifest in nature (p. 115).

Another remarkable incident that highlights Crusoe’s development is his illness, after which his turn to religion is profound and lasting. In fact, Crusoe’s warmest and most characteristic emotion — his anxiety for his soul — is clearly displayed in one of his feverish fits. He hallucinates a man descending from a black cloud on a great flame. This figure brandishes a sword scolding Crusoe for not repenting. Crusoe emerges from this vision, noting the innumerable occasions when

he had been delivered from death. He cries over his ingratitude. Crusoe's depiction of this vision is gloomy and dark. It is clouded by feelings of guilt and mental agitation. Thus, Defoe "shows an awareness of the limitations of his art, a novelistic tact, in avoiding sensuous description and giving us the vision in terms which enhance its vagueness and awesomeness" (Ellis, p. 80).

There are many scenes that display Providence's concern for Crusoe and its power over him. It invites him once gently, once harshly, to repent, and usually fails in its endeavor. Yet, Crusoe's illness marks a drastic stage in God's efforts to reclaim him. Starr examines various religious literatures and maintains that "it was of course traditional to represent spiritual infirmity through bodily disease, to express God's cure of souls in medical metaphors, and to regard actual sickness as a particularly opportune occasion for setting repentance in motion" (p. 103). Crusoe's illness and vision signify the spiritual condition that he has reached. Thus, he reaches his lowest spiritual ebb not at the time of committing his 'original sin' but just before conversion.

Crusoe's sinful career takes him on a mission contrary to his clear duty in which he fails to heed the warnings of God and parents. He is faced by many obstacles. He is blind to the cause of his afflictions, but persists obstinately on his course. Finally, the

appearance of the avenging angel forces him to repent. Owing to the tradition of hardy sinners bowed by sickness, there is of course an obvious resemblance between this stern apparition and certain Biblical ones. Starr contends that such motifs were extensively prevalent in homiletic and practical works appearing very early in the literature of conversion (pp. 103-4).

After spending four years on the island, Crusoe observes that "by a constant study, and serious application of the Word of God, and by the assistance of His grace, I gained a different knowledge from what I had before" (p. 128). Indeed this new kind of knowledge stimulates "terrible reflections upon my mind for many months...on the account of my wicked and hardened life past" (p. 131).

Throughout his wanderings, Crusoe is mastered by events rather than master of them. After his initial misstep, each decision that he makes only intensifies the guilt of his 'original sin'. Moreover, in repeating and confirming the substance of the this sin, Crusoe becomes hardened and is increasingly deprived of the power to see, much less choose, true virtue. After his first misfortune at sea, Crusoe observes that "my ill fate pushed me on now with an obstinacy that nothing could resist; and though I had several times loud calls from my reason and my more composed

judgment to go home, yet I had no power to do it" (p. 18). Crusoe's mind was possessed by this "haunting impulse or idea" in spite of his protesting conscience (Rogers, p. 81). In fact, Crusoe's body must be disabled by complete isolation and ill health before he can earnestly reflect on his spiritual condition and genuinely repent.

According to Starr, autobiographers and other writers on repentance usually presented this experience in different stages. First, an event or impression which provokes the sinner to repent; then the protagonist acquires a new sense of self through reflection or consideration; next comes 'conviction' or 'godly sorrow', implying remorseful self-accusation; finally the protagonist experiences 'conversion', when God actually relieves and reclaims the sufferer (p. 106). Of course these stages may vary considerably in form and intensity, but the pattern is usually uniform.

For Crusoe, repentance consists of acknowledging his wretchedness and his absolute dependence on the Lord. This admission is a turning point that provokes a conversion experience, after which Crusoe's view of the island changes drastically. Subsequently, he complains much less about his fate and views his solitary existence more positively: "I had now brought my state of life to be much easier in itself than it was at

first and much easier to my mind, as well as to my body" (p. 130). Paradoxically, Crusoe may never have achieved this spiritual consciousness had he not sinfully disobeyed his father in the first place.

Crusoe strikes the reader as a likeable character. At the onset of the novel he has a friend, the master's son. In his successful voyage he befriends the captain of the ship. After he is captured by the Moors, he contemplates his escape and complains that he had "nobody to communicate it to, no fellow slave, no Englishman..." (p. 24). Crusoe's charisma and leadership qualities seem to attract followers such as Xury, who is prepared to sacrifice his life for him, and Friday, who surrenders completely. However, Crusoe frequently exhibits a distrust of society, thus revealing his intense dissatisfaction with any kind of organized existence. Crusoe's conversion does not eliminate his sense of anxiety concerning the other. His fear of the cannibals devouring him and invading his property haunts him to the extent that it banishes all of his religious hopes. This episode highlights the disjunction between the protagonist's secular concerns and his religious beliefs. Ironically, Crusoe's solitary life allows him to overcome his alienation from God only to reinforce a deep-seated fear of man.

After Crusoe's conversion to Christianity, he struggles strenuously to defend his solitude.

Sim correctly observes that Friday represents the productive servant whose labors accrue to Crusoe's account. This quasi-contractual, exploitative relationship emerges in almost all of Crusoe's subsequent social relations (Sim, p. 171). Even when other Europeans arrive on the island, he institutes a legalistically inclined bond with them, insisting that they should swear upon the Holy Sacraments and the Gospel to be true to him. He also obliges the captain of the mutinied ship to promise "while you stay on this island with me, you will not pretend to any authority here; and if I put arms into your hands, you will upon all occasions give them up to me and do no prejudice to me or mine upon this island, and in the meantime, be governed by my orders" (p. 250). Thus, Crusoe continuously seeks hegemony over others as a way of protecting his own individual autonomy. The isolated self views the outside world through barricades, because others represent a genuine threat to personal independence.

However, Friday's arrival on the island should not be viewed from an exclusively economical perspective. As Starr observes, a constant feature of spiritual autobiographies and a primary motive in composing them is the urge to instruct others about the benefits



of conversion. In Defoe's time, the experience of conversion was considered a necessary qualification for evangelizing. It was also felt that a genuine conversion gives rise to a kind of missionary zeal (Starr, p. 121). This is why Crusoe has an overwhelming desire to impart his newfound religious knowledge to Friday. Having discovered for himself the fundamentals of Christianity by regularly reading the Bible, contemplating nature, and inner reflection on personal experiences, Crusoe views himself as the providential agent who must rescue Friday from paganism. Crusoe admits that "I was but a young doctor, and ill enough qualified for a casuist, or a solver of difficulties .... I had God knows more sincerity than knowledge in all the methods I took for this poor creature's instruction" (pp. 215, 216). However, in sharing his religious knowledge, Crusoe becomes more immersed in his own religion. He thus achieves spiritual growth, and also assists in the salvation of another soul.

In addition to being Friday's mentor, Crusoe also becomes his master. Many modern critics describe Crusoe's relationship to Friday as egocentric and oppressive. However, Starr points out an interesting paradox in Defoe's narrative. At the beginning of the novel, Crusoe rebels against paternal and divine authority, which results in an actual loss of mastery over himself and his

circumstances. However, after his conversion, Crusoe submits to God and acknowledges his dependence on Providence. Only then does he acquire a new degree of mastery over his environment and over himself as well: "In seeking to be a law unto himself, he had lost the power that was properly his; in surrendering to the sovereignty of Providence, he gains extraordinary powers" (Starr, p. 123). In this light, Crusoe's mastery over Friday seems legitimate, since it is made possible only through his submission to God. Paradoxically, sinful independence results in Crusoe's enslavement, whereas righteous dependence issues in mastery over self and others. Submission to God seems to justify Crusoe's patronizing behavior, which contradicts the spirit of humility that Christianity calls its own.

The opposition between Crusoe's practical behavior and his metaphysical beliefs is also accentuated in the way that he represents himself in regal terms. He portrays himself as a king dining alone, attended by his three orders: Poll, his dog, and the cats (p. 147). Years later, after his encounter with the cannibals, he claims his island is now peopled, and that his "people were perfectly subjected. I was absolute lord and lawgiver...we had but three subjects, and they were of three different religions. My man Friday was a Protestant, his father was a pagan and a cannibal,

and the Spaniard was a Papist" (p. 236). He and Friday quell a mutiny against the captain and two other men. Schonhorn accurately observes that Crusoe's triadic pattern alludes to the authority of the first kings, Adam and Noah, and the supreme authority they exercised over their three sons. He also suggests that this scriptural pattern may be behind the medieval notion that a commonweal had to be a union of at least three families (Schonhorn, p.148).

Another binary opposition suggests itself in the inexhaustible conflict that emerges in the novel between free will and determinism. Defoe has created a character who is simultaneously a free agent — free to sin or to do good — but also a being predetermined to be elected or reprobated. Crusoe builds like Solomon (p. 127), is fed by a big miracle like Elijah (p. 132), and wars like Saul (p. 158). However, his conversion does not safeguard him against the anxiety that arises from uncertainty concerning his predestined fate. Nonetheless, Crusoe suggests that a devout Christian is always protected by the secret intimations of Providence, which are "a proof of the converse of spirits and the secret communication between those embodied and those unembodied" (p. 173).

Defoe's narrative ends where it begins — with Crusoe's "foolish inclination" not subsiding. He resumes as seafaring, unrepentant and individualistic as ever. In this sense, Defoe seems to assert individual free will in opposition to rigid predestination. In this way, the narrative closes on "a subversive rather than an authoritarian note, signaling a victory for personal autonomy and against social being; for self and its defence-mechanisms as against the insistent pressures of ideology" (Sim, p.172).

### Chapter Three: Abnegating the Self and the Other.

In Tournier's novel, *Friday* or *The Pacific Limbo*, the fantastic merges with the real and offers new perspectives on various aspects of modern literature. Tournier's Robinson, unlike Defoe's, is not a disobedient son. He is a father who has left behind a wife and two children. His unhappy fate is not predicted by his displeased father, but simply through the tarot cards of Van Deyssel, the Dutch captain of his ship. The shipwreck, and the events that follow, are comparable to those in Defoe's novel. However, a unique feature that truly distinguishes this novel from Defoe's is Tournier's remarkable skill in depicting the psychology of solitude from a fresh point of view.

Robinson's heightened sense of self-consciousness and his subjection to "the demoralizing effects of solitude" (p. 76) threaten his mental well-being. Struggling against utter despair, the dread of madness, the persuasive temptation of suicide, Robinson's growing solitude presents itself as the most venomous and malignant sore of Western man. Consequently, the reader is confronted with a feeling of existential angst that is dreadfully contagious.

Tournier creates a thrilling ethnographic novel that undoubtedly represents the confrontation and fusion of two very different civilizations. Robinson is an eighteenth-century Englishman, while Friday is an Araucanian — an Indian of Chile — of the same epoch. Observed as if from a glass jar, the reader perceives these two civilizations in terms of their dissimilar economic, artistic and religious features. The struggle that develops as a result of this fascinating encounter, and the creation of new civilization as a result of this synthesis, are absolutely remarkable. However, Tournier is not concerned with the marriage of the two civilizations but with the destruction of any and all traces of civilization in a man subjected to the scouring effect of an inhuman solitude.

As in *Robinson Crusoe*, Tournier's Robinson vainly attempts to build a boat. Unfortunately, the boat is too heavy to carry to the sea. At this stage Robinson becomes conscious of "the transformation which solitude was effecting in his own personality. His field of concentration seemed to be both deepening and narrowing" (p. 38). He is so disappointed that he gives in to utter despair. He lives like an animal, slumbering in a slough amidst his own excrement. Then a vision of his younger sister who had died ten years earlier initiates a change in his attitude. Robinson

emerges from the mire seeking a substitute for Others—namely, order and work.

The island like a gigantic laboratory transforms Robinson through a series of metamorphoses. Before his transformation, Robinson's sense of order is inextricably linked to constructed Western notions of time. Upon discovering that he is unable to precisely calculate how long he had been living as a castaway on the island, he becomes alarmed and disoriented:

How long was it since the shipwreck? How many days, weeks, months, even years, had passed? He was assailed with a kind of dizziness when he asked the question, as though he had dropped a stone into a well and were listening in vain for it to reach the bottom. He resolved henceforth to make a notch on a tree trunk for every day that passed, with a cross to mark every thirtieth day. (p. 35)

Robinson then starts to rebuild a Western culture: he discovers writing tools, he keeps record of the time by means of a water clock, he draws a map of the island, he domesticates goats [Tournier refers to man's domestication of animals as a "state of anarchy" (p. 185)], he grows different plants and builds temples and museums—the Museum of Humanity, and the Museum of

Measures and Weights. He decides to rechristen the island, "having from the day of his arrival bestowed on it the opprobrium of that heavy name, the Island of Desolation" (p. 47). It is now named Speranza (Hope), after the name of a girl he used to know.

Unlike Defoe's Robinson, who obsessively keeps a journal to record his daily activities, Tournier's Robinson attaches little importance to daily occurrences, preferring "to record his thoughts, his spiritual progress, his recollections of the past and the reflections to which these gave rise" (pp. 46-7). He finally decides to write a Constitution and a Penal Law, proclaiming himself the Governor of the Island. Despite the virtual futility of these proceedings, Robinson feels more secure and regains a sense of self. He is wholly convinced that he needs "to fight against time...to imprison time. Insofar as I live from day to day, I let myself drift; time slips through my fingers, and in losing time I lose myself .... When I began a calendar I regained possession of myself" (p. 60).

Indeed, Robinson's attempt to dominate Speranza, Friday, and even himself through dates, specific times, and a rigid work schedule, is absolutely bizarre. He draws up a charter, specifically displaying in capital letters that it has been inaugurated on the "1000<sup>th</sup> day of the local calendar" (p. 69). He also selects fixed



times for work to begin and end. He writes in Article V: "Sunday is a day of rest. At seven o'clock on Saturday evening all work on the island will cease and the inhabitants will don their best attire for dinner. On Sunday morning at ten they will gather in the Meeting House to meditate on a text from the Holy Scriptures" (p. 70). This schedule is laughable, because at this point in the narrative he is the sole inhabitant of the island. Yet, in displaying the extremity of Robinson's behavior, Tournier invites the reader to question the sanity of the protagonist as well as the saneness of any time-enslaved system.

The novel exposes the perverse structure of the colonial project, which presupposes "the murder of the possible" thereby committing an "Other-cide" and an "altrucide"—to use Deleuze's terms (p. 320). Thus, Robinson's journey into the absencing of Others depicts the colonial enterprise in extremis. Moreover, unlike Defoe's Robinson, who does not produce beyond his need, apparently believing that evil begins with surplus production, Tournier's Robinson engages in a frantic mode of production, thinking that consumption is the sole evil, since one always consumes alone and for oneself (Deleuze, p. 314). Thus, Tournier's narrative produces "a powerful contemporary criticism of Western society's consumer culture and express[es] a renewed

aspiration to alternative forms of spirituality" (Birkett and Kearns, p. 231). Indeed, unlike Defoe's Robinson, whose inventions come to a halt as a result of his fear of the cannibals, Tournier's Robinson exhibits various constructive activities that serve as his only remedies against the temptation of the mire (p.76).

Later, Robinson undergoes a strange inner experience when, at a certain moment, the water clock suddenly stops. On discovering this, Robinson stretches luxuriously on his couch, reflecting with "delight that he had only to plug the hole in the water clock and he could suspend the passing of time whenever he chose!" (p. 89). Tournier exposes Robinson's egotism in his need for absolute control over time, inculcated into him by his Western culture. The clock — the master of the work schedule — traditionally plays a fundamental role in the colonizers' scheme for controlling the other. Tournier presents Robinson as a time-enslaved man who is possessed with the illusion of his "omnipotence over the island" (p. 89).

Moreover, Robinson seeks to control Friday with his time-based work schedule, by purposely manipulating time to shackle his subject to labour. He even names his "slave" after a workday—"Friday". Robinson impudently explains what the name signifies:

I have solved the problem with some elegance in giving him the name of the day on which I saved him — Friday. It is the name neither of a person nor of a common object, but somewhat between the two, that of a half-living, half-abstract entity, a name strongly stressing its temporal character, fortuitous and as it were episodic ....  
(p.139)

After Robinson finally put use to the coins he had saved from the Virginia, by paying his “slave” for his labour, Friday could buy “himself a half-day’s repose (a whole day was not purchasable)” (p. 141).

It is therefore significant that when the clock stops in Robinson’s absence, Friday considers himself master of the island. He occupies himself with wild, absurd games. He dresses cactuses in garments from Robinson’s case. He pulls trees from the ground and plants them upside down. He smokes Robinson’s last piece of tobacco in the cave. When Robinson calls him, Friday throws the pipe deep into the cave where the gunpowder was buried. The cave explodes.

Afterwards, Friday leads the play. He stimulates Robinson’s dull imagination. As the title indicates, it is Friday who is the main character who guides Robinson towards his complete

metamorphosis. He leads him headlong to discoveries of which the Englishman till then would never have taken risk to attempt. Friday's presence alters the arrangement of power, particularly after the explosion, which destroyed Robinson's reconstruction of European social and geographic organization. Symbolically, Friday kills Andoar, the old goat, and through a series of trials, transforms him into an elemental figure that flies and sings. Similarly, Robinson's interest shifts from a judicial, economic and disciplinary mode to a burning aspiration for ascension and a total abnegation of self and other. As Deleuze correctly observes, *Friday* is "an experimental, inductive novel" that explores the outcome of a solitary existence without Others, the effects on the island of the absence of Others, the effects of the presence of Others in our existence, and finally what the Other is and what it means for the Others to be absent (Deleuze, pp. 304-5).

Living in an insular world without the Other, Robinson at first longs for the company of mankind. There are many instances in which the Other is described in positive terms by the narrator: "Nakedness is a luxury in which a man may indulge himself without danger only when he is warmly surrounded by his fellow man" (p. 33). Robinson understands that other people can bring about a sudden shift in consciousness:

He discovered that for all of us the presence of other people is a powerful element of distraction, not only because they constantly break into our activities and interrupt our train of thought, but because the mere possibility of their doing so illumines a world of concerns situated at the edge of our consciousness but capable at any moment of becoming its center. (p. 38)

He understands his practical dependency: "He knew now that man resembles a person injured in a street riot, who can only stay upright while the crowd packed densely around him continues to prop him up" (p. 40). Robinson also observes in his journal: "I was in a land bereft of humankind.... Since then I have noted with a horrid fascination the dehumanizing process which I feel to be inexorably at work within me" (p. 54). Alienated from mankind, Robinson finally acknowledges his distance from ordinary values: "I have nothing to connect me with life — wife, children, friends, enemies, servants, customers — those anchors that keep our feet on earth" (p. 82).

When the water clock suddenly stops, Robinson discerns the existence of "*another island* behind the one where he had labored so long in solitude, a place more alive, warmer and more fraternal, which his mundane preoccupations had concealed from him" (p.

90). Immediately after this incident, he writes in his journal “that the presence of others — and their unregarded intrusion into all our thinking — is a serious cause of confusion and obscurity in the relationship between the knower and the known” (p.91). Robinson expresses skepticism concerning social needs: “I know now that if the society of others is a fundamental element in the constitution of the human individual, it is nevertheless not irreplaceable” (p. 111). It is noteworthy that at this stage he had not yet met Friday.

Speranza, like Robinson and Friday, changes form in the course of the novel. There is a Freudian episode in which Robinson seeks shelter in the womb of Speranza: he covers himself with milk and curls up in an embryonic position at the bottom of the cave. Having realized “the monstrous maternal role he had imposed on her” and the fact that he almost “came near to sully[ing] her with my semen”, he describes himself as a “monster of incest” (p. 109). Later on, the island arouses his sexual desire, and he couples with branches of a tree that resembled “huge, black, parted thighs” (p. 115). His intercourse with what he refers to as the “pink coomb” produces a new species of flowers that resembles “the body of a woman-child” (p. 129). Eventually, Robinson’s desire and his sexual identity become undifferentiated

and objectless — he describes “the self-indulgence of lovers” as “a course of mad self-abnegation” (p.124).

Friday’s presence causes the explosion within the soul of Speranza. Hence, on several occasions, the narrator refers to Speranza as the “other island” (pp. 90,91,132,144). Only after his conversion to the Solar reign, Robinson writes that he seemed to glimpse “*another island* hidden beneath the buildings and tilled fields which I had created on Speranza. Now I have been transported to that other Speranza, I live perpetually in a moment of innocence” (p.205).

Hence, as Deleuze observes, Robinson initially experiences the loss of Others as a fundamental disorder of the world where nothing subsists but the opposition of light and night. Everything is perceived as harmful and the world loses its transitions and virtuality. Robinson gradually discovers that it is the Other who disturbs the world. Since the Other is the trouble, having disappeared, it is no longer only the days which are redressed. Things are no longer being pulled down by Others, one on top of the other. Desire, too, is no longer drawn down on top of a possible world or a possible object expressed by others (Deleuze, pp. 311-312).

Thus, Tournier's narrative is split in three: past tense, third-person narrative and present tense. The narrative structurally mirrors the thematic metamorphosis in the text. Before Friday's appearance, Robinson appertained to the Earthy Kingdom. He loved his island as a child loves his mother as shown through the cave episode, then as a husband loves his wife as shown through the pink coomb episode. Later, Friday's Aeolian or airy spirit influences Robinson's metamorphosis by turning him towards the sun. Robinson's inward journey of self-discovery takes him through the elements: he is transported to the island over water, he bonds with the Earth in different ways, he learns to appreciate Friday's Aeolian spirit, and eventually turns towards the Sun. At this stage, Robinson seeks to ascend out of himself, time and history:

O Sun, deliver me from the pull of gravity!... Teach me lightness of heart, the smiling acceptance of the day's gifts, without calculation or gratitude or fear.... But if my Aeolian comrade draws me to himself, O Sun, is it not that he may guide me toward you? (pp. 202-03).

Although Tournier's Robinson was brought up a Quaker — a sect that often took the lead in opposing slavery, he boldly declares, "I must fit my slave into the system which I have perfected over the years.... A savage is not wholly a human being"



(pp. 138-139). There are many instances in which this kind of discrepancy emerges in Robinson's behavior. Moreover, Tournier advocates pantheism on several occasions. For having retrieved himself from the temptation of the mire through the "sacred act of writing" (p.46), Robinson reflects "at the root of a certain kind of Christianity there lies the radical rejection of Nature and earthly things, a rejection which I have practiced to excess in regard to Speranza, and which has nearly been my downfall" (p. 52). Tournier also equates Nature with God, suggesting that they are both the same (p. 48).

However, a distinctive theme of Quakerism is trust in the Inward Light. This Light does not symbolize conscience or reason; it is rather that of God in everyone, which allows man an immediate sense of God's presence and will, thereby informing conscience and redirecting reason. The experience of hearkening to this inner Guide is mystical (Bauman, pp. 24-28). Robinson undergoes a series of avatars before he attains the Solar reign — a phase in which he aspires for ascension and the total annihilation of self and other. After the explosion, it is ironic that Friday encourages Robinson to maintain his journal by making quills from albatross feathers and ink from porcupine fish. At this stage, writing traces Robinson's desire toward solar subjection

where total submission is absolutely essential — a submission that is ultimately rewarding: “the glowing light clad him in an armor of unfading youth and set upon his head a helmet flawlessly polished and a visor with diamond eyes” (p. 235).

The three stages of Robinson's evolution appertain to the three types of knowledge expounded by Spinoza in his *Ethics*. Knowledge of the first type goes through the senses, feelings and sentiments and is characterized by its subjectivity, its fortuity and immediacy. To the knowledge of the second type correspond sciences and techniques. This knowledge is rational yet superficial, mediate and boldly utilitarian. Only the third type of knowledge delivers the Absolute in an intuition of its essence (Wolfson, pp. 131-163). Certainly, the mire, the administered island and the Solar Reign successively represent these three types of Knowledge. Whether this parallelism is deliberate on Tournier's part or not is insignificant. These three stages echo a classical scheme that is probably found in more than one religious or philosophical doctrine. “Threefold classifications of knowledges seem to have been in vogue among the Jews, Moslems, and Christians alike” (Wolfson, p. 133).

Friday's arrival brings about the stripping to the skin of the foundations of Robinson's being and his life. Friday serves

as a guide and accoucheur for the birth of the new Robinson. Friday appears at first to consent to Robinson's rigid organization of the island. He is the sole subject in Governor Robinson's Kingdom, the only soldier commanded by General Robinson, the only taxpayer of the tax collector Robinson, and so on. Apparently, he bowed and submitted to Robinson's whims and fancies with docile good humor. Yet his presence had a disturbing and unsettling effect on Robinson's imposed order. He makes Robinson dislike the coomb, having reproduced for his own pleasure another species of Mandrakes.

Friday sowed doubt in a fragile system, which only held him by a blind conviction. When Friday unintentionally incited the destruction of all the provisions accumulated by Robinson, Robinson reacted feebly as if he expected or most certainly hoped for such a catastrophe. Moreover, the explosion of the cave symbolizes the internal explosion that occurs within Robinson's soul.

Tournier's challenging philosophical narrative style invites the reader to question all assumptions, for he significantly does not attempt to bring any closure to his novel. Although an English ship casts anchor off the coast of the island, Robinson is repelled by

the crew's manner. He recognizes in them "motives of greed, arrogance, and violence" (p. 219). He realizes that he cannot restore men to their function as Others, because the structure they used to fill has itself disappeared. "That was what other people were: the possible obstinately passing for the real" (p.220). And although "Robinson's upbringing had taught him that to reject their affirmation was cruel, egotistical, and immoral...this was an attitude of mind that he had lost during the years, and now he wondered if he could ever recover it" (Ibid). He chooses to remain on the island. Upon discovering that Friday has left with them, the prospect of solitude drives him to utter despair, and he decides to commit suicide. At the decisive moment, he finds the cabin boy who had decided to run away from the ship where he was badgered too much by the crew. Robinson decides to name him Sunday after "the day of the resurrection, of the youth of all things, and the day of our master, the Sun" (235).

## Conclusion: The Constancy of Solitude.

Careful readings of *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, *Robinson Crusoe* and *Friday* have demonstrated that the recurrent theme of solitude is an essential prerequisite for an introspective analysis of the enigmatic self. These three literary works suggest how solitude manifests itself as a constant theme throughout history, and how the self invariably emerges through this experience.

Hayy's spiritual progression occupies most of *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, while his encounter with the Other—Absal—is a short episode. Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* brings us quickly to Crusoe's journey to an uninhabited island where he converts to an active Christianity. For Hayy, knowledge of the Divine carries with it a burden of social responsibility. He and Absal travel to the other island to spread their message. Similarly, Defoe's Robinson aspires to impart his newfound religious knowledge to Friday. In contrast, Tournier's *Friday* presents us with a less overtly religious protagonist.

Ibn Tufayl points out Hayy's success in his progression from near non-being to near the peak of human perfection without the help of society and without the intervention of language. Thus, "not knowing how to speak did not prevent him [Hayy] from

understanding" (p. 149). Defoe's Crusoe obsessively keeps a journal that record his daily activities and reflect his impulse toward self-awareness. He even spends months teaching the parrot to say: "Poor Robin Crusoe! Where are you? Where have you been? How come you here?" (p. 141) Tournier's Robinson records his spiritual progress in his diary. Tournier describes writing as a "sacred act" which half retrieved Robinson from sinking into the mire.

Hayy lives frugally to attain spiritual oneness with the Necessarily Existent. Defoe's Crusoe does not produce beyond his needs and enjoys the fruits of his labor. Tournier's Robinson, however, is obsessed with over production and views consumption as the sole evil.

It is noteworthy that the Cave motif is recurrent in the three texts. In *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, Hayy withdraws into the cave to achieve oneness with the Divine, alluding to the cave in Mount Hira'a in which the Angel Gabriel descended on the Prophet Muhammad. Goodman correctly observes that in the Western tradition, the cave "is symbol of darkness and dogmatic slumber, not of personal enlightenment but of mass ignorance and unconcern. The great awakening is the moment when a solitary individual stumbles out of the huddled darkness of the cave and

away from the cave-thoughts into the blinding sunlight" (p. 218). This symbolic use of the cave is evident in Tournier's *Friday*, where Robinson seeks shelter in the womb of Speranza. In *Robinson Crusoe*, however, the protagonist uses the cave solely as a storehouse for his provisions and builds his "fortress" on the side of a rock that was a little hollow like a cave. The cave for Defoe's Robinson is the means through which he protects himself and his belongings from the Other. In addition, Hayy is absolutely fascinated by Absal's arrival on the island, unlike Defoe's Robinson, who suspects that the footprint he had found belonged to the Devil. Again, the Other in *Robinson Crusoe* is represented as a potential threat. Tournier's Robinson, in contrast, abnegates Self and Other.

Hayy at the age of thirty-five wonders how knowledge of the Divine had come to him. In the original text, Ibn Tufayl answers this query with a verse from the Holy Quran: "Our Lord is He Who gave to each (created) thing its form and nature, and further, gave (it) guidance" (S. XX. 50). Goodman omits this, too, from his translation. Defoe's Robinson arrives at religious insights mainly after a remarkable incident, his illness, during which he hallucinates an avenging Angel. He also asserts "the mere notions of nature, though they will guide reasonable creatures to the

knowledge of a God, and of a worship or homage due to the supreme being of God, as the consequence of our nature; yet nothing but Divine revelation can form the knowledge of ... the Word of God and the Spirit of God..." (p. 215). Tournier's Robinson experiences haunting visions from the past. He writes in his journal: "I know that universal consent is the only proof — and not only of the existence of God" (p. 122). Hayy's visions on the other hand, are beatific and mystical. In order to experience them, Hayy had to restrain his imagination and cut off all sensory bonds. Hence, the deep Platonic prejudice against the things of sense holds that appetite, awareness of other, or even of self are considered impediments to the purity of the intellectual experience. This point may be related to Tournier's theme of self-abnegation.

In *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, *Robinson Crusoe* and *Friday*, the protagonists belong to different time frames and come from different cultural backgrounds, yet the theme of solitude is common to all three texts. All three characters experience a feeling of alienation in their solitude. "Just as he was mounting to a height from which he could gaze out toward the approaches of the world of mind, Hayy felt alien and alone" (p.126). Defoe's Crusoe also experienced anguish at his solitary condition: "my very heart would die within me to think of the woods, the mountains, the deserts I



was in; and how I was a prisoner locked up with the eternal bars and bolts of the ocean, in an uninhabited wilderness...” (p. 113). Similarly, Tournier’s Robinson is “more convinced than ever that this place [the island] was wholly alien and hostile” (p. 36). All three characters experience a great transformation within their personalities. Solitude affects many changes in the fabric of their mental and emotional states. Nonetheless, solitude as encountered in these three works turns out to be an essential prerequisite in enabling consciousness to discover truth about self and the world.

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